



Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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Evaluation

Report of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee on the external assessments of the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Summary

The Global Evaluation Advisory Committee submits this report and recommendations based on consideration of three external assessments of the evaluation function undertaken in 2014 by the United Nations Evaluation Group - Peer Review Group, the Joint Inspection Unit and the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network.

The report presents the conclusions of the Committee's deliberations and offers advice to UN Women – its Executive Board, Under-Secretary General / Executive Director, and Independent Evaluation Office – on the future of evaluation at UN Women. The report is based on the Committee's consideration of the three external assessments and deliberations on their findings. It highlights strengths of the evaluation function, identifies areas that require further strengthening, and proposes recommendations and next steps.

The report also includes consolidated findings of the three external assessments organized around the key criteria of independence, credibility, utility, as well as system-wide promotion of evaluations responsive to gender equality and women's empowerment in the United Nations system, and strengthening national capacities for gender-responsive evaluation.

I. Introduction

1. The UN Women [Evaluation Policy](#) (UNW/2012/12), which entered into force in January 2013, governs the independent evaluation function and applies to all initiatives supported by UN Women. The policy governs UN Women's evaluation function by establishing a framework for ensuring an independent evaluation function managed by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) that provides credible evidence with respect to the performance of UN Women in terms of results achieved in the pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It also establishes the role of UN Women in system-wide evaluation and in promoting evaluations responsive to gender equality and women's rights in the United Nations system, as well as in strengthening national capacities for gender-responsive evaluation.

2. As prescribed in the evaluation policy, the [Global Evaluation Advisory Committee \(GEAC\)](#) was established in December 2013 to further ensure the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function.¹ The Committee is composed of external independent evaluators representing different geographical areas and institutional backgrounds, senior evaluation experts from entities of the United Nations system and Bretton Woods institutions, and senior management of UN Women.² It is chaired by the Director-General of the Independent Evaluation Group at the World Bank Group. The Committee provides advice to the Under-Secretary-General / Executive Director and the Independent Evaluation Office on the evaluation function. The Committee met in December 2014 to discuss the findings of the external assessments of UN Women evaluation function and agree upon recommendations for moving forward.

3. Three external assessments of UN Women, which included an assessment of the evaluation function, were undertaken in 2014: United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Professional Peer Review of the UN Women Evaluation Function (issued in September 2014); JIU Analysis of the evaluation function in the UN System (final un-edited version shared in December 2014); and the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) assessment of UN Women (draft version shared in December 2014). The Annex to this report presents a synthesis of the findings of these external assessments. The GEAC finds the assessments, despite their various limitations, to be generally sound and well-evidenced. Although the three assessments were undertaken independently of each other for contrasting purposes and with different methodologies, the evidence presented and conclusions reached are, in general, consistent. This lends strong credibility to the findings and conclusions of the assessments overall.

¹ Terms of Reference for the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee:

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/about%20us/evaluation/evaluation-unwomenevaluationcommittee-tor-en.pdf>

² List of members of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee for 2014-2016:

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/about%20us/evaluation/evaluation-unwomenevaluationcommittee-members-2014-2016-en.ashx>

4. This report presents the conclusions of the Committee's deliberations and offers advice to UN Women – its Executive Board, Under-Secretary General / Executive Director, and IEO – on the future of evaluation at UN Women. It is based on consideration and discussion of all three external assessments and builds on the Committee's first engagement with UN Women during which it recognized the unique nature and opportunity of UN Women and its evaluation function. This report reflects a strategic vision for the evaluation function in line with the mandate of UN Women, highlights strengths of the evaluation function, identifies areas that require further strengthening, and recommends a way forward.

5. The report presents the Committee's Key Conclusions (section II) and its Recommendations (section III). The findings of the three external assessments are summarized in Annex 1.

II. Key Conclusions

6. **Strong central evaluation capacity.** The Committee notes and agrees with consistent findings of all three external assessments, undertaken independently of each other, that UN Women has a strong central evaluation office, IEO. The assessments all found that IEO performs well against evaluation standards of independence, credibility and utility, and in comparison with other UN organizations. It is this strong performance that has led the Committee to its key conclusions and recommendations, which build on IEO's well-evidenced strengths as a sound foundation for further development. This forward looking approach would not have been possible had the findings of the three external assessments been less positive.

7. **Transformational character.** The Committee recognizes the unique mission of UN Women. Created only four years ago, UN Women has a mandate that spans normative, operational and coordination, and will require strong advocacy and partnerships within the UN and outside, in particular with civil society. Moreover, achieving gender equality will, in the face of immense challenges, require transformational change in the way families, communities, societies, countries, and institutions function. This transformational mandate extends to the evaluation function, including IEO as well.

8. **Evaluation as an integral part of UN Women's mission.** Reviewing the mandate of UN Women, the Committee concludes that evaluation is central to the achievement of UN Women's mission and in supporting fulfilment of its transformational role. It brings evidence and knowledge to its normative, operational and coordination work, and complements its advocacy and research activities.

9. **Capitalizing on evaluation findings and recommendations.** The Committee sees a great opportunity in UN Women's Senior Management Team owning, internalizing and using evaluation findings in its own deliberations on international platforms, with partners, the Executive Board, and within the organization. The transformational nature of the

mandate requires evaluation, reflection, learning and change without which the challenging mission of the organization will be hard to achieve. A deliberate and proactive approach to using evaluative evidence will contribute towards better informed normative, operational and coordination work and outcomes. It will also provide strong signals within and beyond the organization about the importance of evidence and learning from experience.

10. Safeguard and continuously strengthen the evaluation function. The Committee recognizes the strong performance of IEO and suggests that UN Women is best served by safeguarding these gains by continuing to secure the independence, credibility and utility of evaluation. IEO needs to function as a role model within UN Women, the UN system and beyond to support the transformational agenda of the organization. To build on and further reinforce its strong performance, the Committee finds it important that IEO:

- Provides, through its presence on the Senior Management Team, the timely sharing of evaluation evidence to facilitate its use by the leadership team; and, more generally, contributes to the development of arrangements for knowledge management in UN Women to provide staff and partners with information and evidence relevant to their various tasks and roles;
- Supports the delivery of gender-responsive evaluations through processes (for instance, participatory approaches giving voice to a broad range of stakeholders) and methods (for instance, addressing whether and how value systems and gender relationships have been affected, or choosing methods that link evaluations to specific normative, operational and/or coordination work). Innovation, identification, sharing and replication of methods for gender-responsive evaluation are much needed across the development community and should be at the forefront of IEO's work;
- Demonstrates how evaluation helps UN Women achieve its mission by tracking and reporting on follow-up to evaluation recommendations and the difference they have made.

11. Budget predictability. To achieve this ambition, the Committee agrees with the importance of allocating sufficient financial resources for evaluation, at central level and for decentralized evaluations; recognizes progress made towards meeting the 3% programme budget target in the Evaluation Policy; and welcomes the Executive Board's request for the establishment of a separate budget line for evaluation within the organizational budget to be approved by the Executive Board.³

12. Strengthening decentralized evaluation. The Committee concurs with the need to strengthen decentralized evaluation activities and recognizes the efforts that IEO has invested in doing so. It is in this domain where the Committee sees opportunities to innovate: working with local partners, decentralized evaluations can both become a driver

³ UN Women, Annual Session of the Executive Board, June 2014, Decision 2014/3; accessible at: <http://papersmart.unmeetings.org/media2/3816170/advanced-unedited-decision-2014-3-unw-eb-evaluation-function.pdf>

for capacity development while benefiting from local capabilities and perspectives. Building strong local partnerships, and capacitating and empowering them to undertake gender-responsive evaluation activities will be essential to broaden UN Women's reach and effect, both on the UN System and beyond. It will also help generate relevant and necessary evaluation evidence on the effects of normative, operational and coordination work on gender equality and women's empowerment.

13. **UN Systemic Role.** In view of the role of UN Women in system-wide efforts to reach gender equality and women's empowerment, the Committee recognizes the importance of aligning UN Women's evaluation function with this goal. The Committee appreciates the achievements made to date, and suggests identifying the most effective channels for sharing evaluation evidence and influencing decision-making. These include, but are not limited to, the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and its expert group at global level, and the UNDAF at country level, in particular the UNCT's monitoring and evaluation working group and the UNDG Quality Assurance mechanism at the regional level through the Regional UNDGs.

14. **National evaluation capacity development.** As indicated above, the Committee sees opportunities to connect decentralized evaluations with national gender-responsive evaluation capacity development. It also suggests working through existing initiatives for evaluation capacity development, building on IEO's comparative advantage by focusing on gender-responsive evaluation activities. The Committee notes the importance of this work and its relevance to reinforcing nationally owned and nationally driven interventions aimed at achieving greater gender equality and women's empowerment. South-South and triangular initiatives can link institutions in countries where effective capacities already exist with partners where support is needed.

III. Recommendations

15. Recommendation 1: The Global Evaluation Advisory Committee recommends that UN Women, the Executive Board, the Under-Secretary General / Executive Director, and IEO seize the opportunity to recognize evaluation as an integral part of the organization's mission. Strengthening the evidence base for its normative, operational and coordination roles will enhance its effectiveness. Evaluation evidence complements evidence from data analysis, monitoring, review and research. See Annex 2 for a table that shows the alignment between the recommendations presented here and those of the external assessments.

16. Recommendation 2: The Committee further recommends that UN Women protect the strong performance of IEO and continue to strengthen the utility, credibility, and independence of evaluation, with particular focus on utility, innovation and country-based partnerships for decentralized evaluations.

17. Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that each member of the Senior Management Team signal the importance of evaluation, through the demonstrated use of

evaluation findings, to incentivize evidence-based normative, operational and coordination work. This commitment will also strengthen the attention paid to decentralized evaluation.

18. Recommendation 4: Concerning the independence of evaluation, the Committee recommends that: a) budget provisions be approved as a separate budget line in the organizational budget framework to be approved by the Executive Board, with the aim of achieving the target of 3% of programme budget; and b) a solution be found to protect the tenure of evaluation staff.

19. Recommendation 5: The Committee's recommendations, set out above, cover most but not all of the various recommendations of the external assessments. The remaining recommendations from the external assessments, including those concerning the independence of IEO, should be addressed at a later date when revising the Evaluation Policy. The Committee recommends that an internal review, building on the results of the external reviews, should be undertaken to inform any revision of the Evaluation Policy. The process should be consultative, involving key stakeholders such as the Executive Board, Senior Management Team, and others. Such consultations may be expected to arrive at a model of independence that is appropriate to UN Women while safeguarding the impartiality and credibility of the organization's evaluation function. The Committee recommends that the review be undertaken after ongoing processes to define the post-2015 Agenda, in particular agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals, the adoption of the next Quadrennial Comprehensive Progress Review, the adoption of a resolution on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level by the United Nations General Assembly as well as the deliberations of the General Assembly on the JIU Report on the evaluation function in the UN system and the many activities expected to take place in celebration of the 2015 International Year of Evaluation. The Committee therefore expects that the best time to initiate the review of the Evaluation Policy will be 2016, with a view to submitting a revised Evaluation Policy to the Executive Board in early 2017.

20. Recommendation 6: The Committee does not recommend to repeat another peer review at that time in light of the numerous and thorough reviews undertaken in 2014.

Annex 1

I. The approach of the external assessments

1. The evaluation function of UN Women was reviewed by three separate and independent external assessments undertaken in 2014. The overall findings of these assessments were aligned and complemented each other, providing a full-fledged assessment of the UN Women evaluation function. The UNEG professional peer review provides an independent in-depth review of the evaluation function of UN Women benchmarked against established UNEG norms and standards. The JIU review provides a basis for comparing the UN Women evaluation function with those of other UN entities, as it assessed the evaluation function across UN entities benchmarking against a framework that combined JIU, UNEG and other standards. The JIU report issued recommendations towards the legislative bodies and executive management of those entities assessed. On the other hand, the MOPAN assessment looked across dimensions of UN Women organizational effectiveness and also assessed measurement and reporting on development results benchmarking against the MOPAN agreed-upon criteria. Thus, the MOPAN report provides a basis for comparing the performance of the evaluation function against other functions within UN Women. Details on the approach for each assessment are summarized below.

2. **Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of UN Women (UNEG Peer Review Panel, September 2014):** The professional peer review of the evaluation function of UN Women was carried out following a formal request made by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UN Women to the UNEG Task Force on Peer Reviews. The peer review was carried out within the overall provisions contained in the [UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN organizations](#), which specify a focus on how the function performs with regards to independence, credibility, and utility. The review also looked at system-wide evaluation and promotion of evaluations responsive to gender equality and women's rights in the United Nations system, as well as strengthening national capacities for gender-responsive evaluation.

3. **Analysis of the evaluation function in the UN System (Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), unedited version, December 2014):** The JIU study assessed 24 UN entities from funds and programmes, specialized agencies and other related organizations. The study is focused primarily on the corporate evaluation function and secondarily on the decentralized evaluation functions of the UN system. The performance of these 24 corporate evaluation functions was assessed against a "maturity matrix" that identified 5 areas and 66 indicators to benchmark against established standards endorsed by UNEG, JIU and development partners. The areas assessed were: a) The enabling environment, institutional framework and support systems; b) Independence with inclusion for enhanced credibility; c) Quality-technical and managerial rigour for enhanced credibility; d) Utility - use and impact of use;

and e) Relevance and Readiness to support United Nations Organization and system-wide reforms and to address emerging changes and challenges.

4. **Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) - Synthesis Report: UN Women (MOPAN, Draft December 2014):** MOPAN identified four areas of organizational effectiveness upon which the assessment is based: a) strategic management, b) operational management, c) relationship management, and d) knowledge management. The evaluation function is assessed under the dimension on “evaluating results”.⁴ The MOPAN assessment of UN Women is based on information collected through a survey of key stakeholders, document review, and interviews with UN Women staff.

II. Findings

A. UN Women evaluation function is sound overall

5. UNEG, JIU and MOPAN were aligned with their overall assessment of the UN Women evaluation function. UNEG determined the evaluation function was “sound overall”⁵ and pointed out that the practices of its staff were aligned with UNEG Norms and Standards and no ethical violations were found.⁶ MOPAN assessed the evaluation function as having “a strong structure, planning systems, and an operational framework geared to promote accountability and learning at both corporate and decentralised levels” and noted that UN-Women has “strong evaluation practices”.⁷ Key Performance Indicator (KPI) 19 on evaluating results scored amongst the highest overall KPI scores for UN Women as assessed by MOPAN.⁸ UN Women evaluation function was ranked by JIU within the highest cluster along with the highest performing corporate evaluation functions of UN entities (see figure 1).⁹

⁴ The MOPAN review assesses the evaluation function under the dimension on knowledge management, as Key Performance Indicator 19 “evaluating results”. MOPAN, x

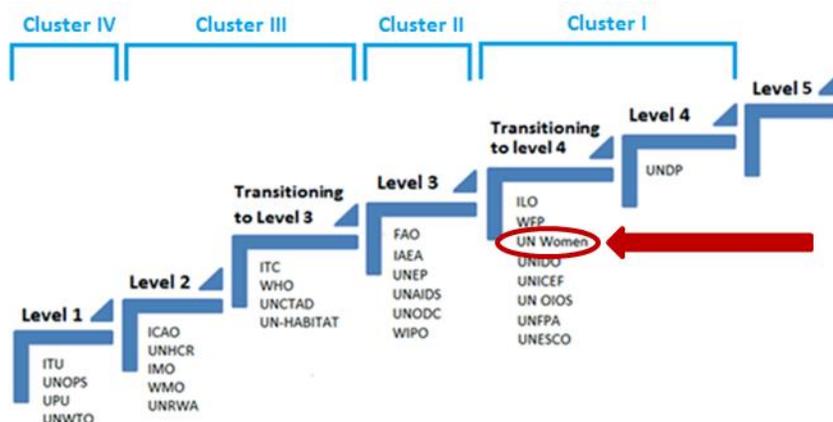
⁵ UNEG, 3

⁶ UNEG, 11

⁷ MOPAN, 23

⁸ MOPAN, x

⁹ JIU, 20 and Vol. II

Figure 1 JIU-assessed overall level of maturity of the corporate evaluation function¹⁰

6. When compared with only UN entities with overall annual budget less than USD 300m (small budget entities), UN Women received the second highest overall score across all sub-components out of nine entities.¹¹ UN Women scored most similarly to other stand-alone evaluation units (which refers to evaluation units that operate as a separate office of evaluation or as a separate office of evaluation under the office of the executive head), ranking fourth highest out of eleven similar evaluation units (See figure 2 and figure 3).

Figure 2 JIU-assessed level of development of the evaluation function by size of the entities' overall annual budget and the location of the corporate evaluation function¹²

	Small		Medium		Large	
	Organization	Grade	Organization	Grade	Organization	Grade
Stand Alone	UNODC	5.2	ILO	6.7	WFP	6.7
	UNIDO	6.4	UNEP	5.8	UNDP	7.1
	UN Women	6.2	UNFPA	6.0	UNICEF	6.3
					FAO	5.9
Co-Located/ Management	ITC	4.9	UNAIDS	5.3	UNHCR	3.8
	UNCTAD	4.4				
	UN-Habitat	4.2				
Co-Located Oversight/Audit	IMO	3.7	UNESCO	6.1	UN-OIOS	6.2
	WMO	3.5	UNRWA	3.4	WHO	4.7
	ICAC	3.9	WIPO	5.2		
			IAEA	5.9		
	3.0-4.9 = Below Average and Low		5.0-6.0 = Average		6.1-8.0 = Above Average and High	

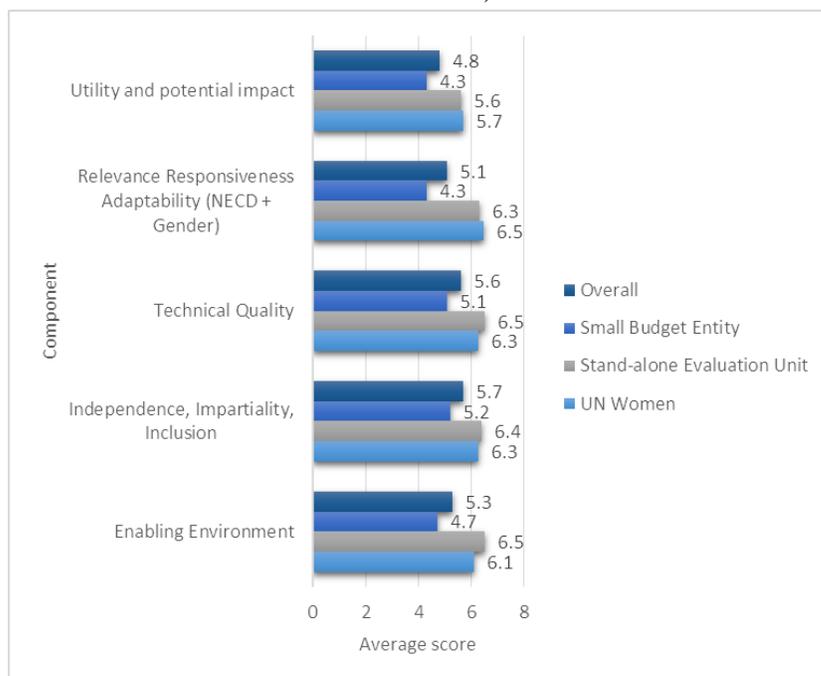
¹⁰ JIU, 18

¹¹ JIU, Vol. II

¹² JIU, 19

7. As shown in figure 3, UN Women evaluation function outperforms both the overall average of the 24 UN entities assessed by JIU and the average for small budget entities.

Figure 3 JIU-assessed average score by component (overall, small budget entity, stand-alone evaluation unit and UN Women)¹³



B. The enabling environment for evaluation at UN Women is strong

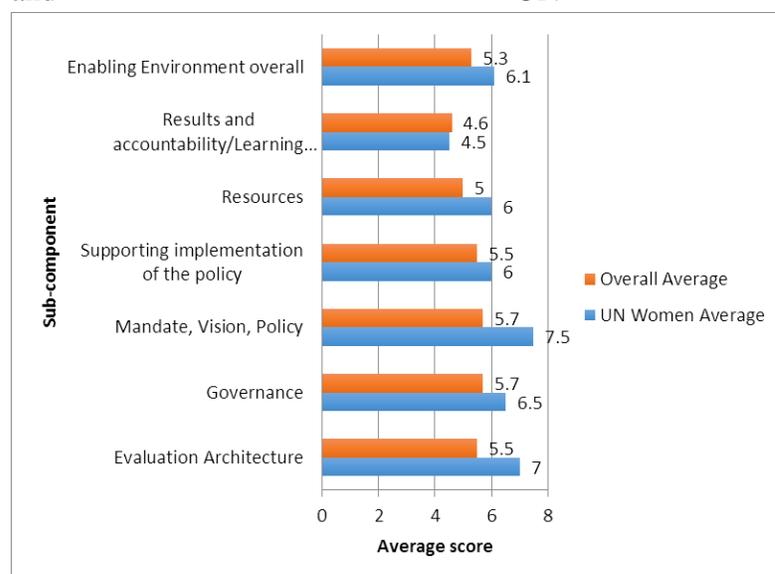
8. All three assessments were aligned with their finding that the enabling environment for evaluation at UN Women is strong. UNEG identified “a strong level of support for the evaluation function”¹⁴ and the establishment of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee was highlighted as a positive development.¹⁵ The UN Women score as assessed by JIU for enabling environment was much above the overall average with the exception of “results and accountability”, which referred to the overall results-based monitoring framework and system at UN Women (see Figure 4).

¹³ JIU, based on UN Women maturity matrix and Vol. II, Annex 6

¹⁴ UNEG, 3

¹⁵ UNEG, 13

Figure 4 JIU-assessed average score by sub-component: enabling environment (overall and UN Women)¹⁶



9. The Evaluation Policy, corporate evaluation strategy, corporate evaluation plan, and IEO guidelines were identified by all assessments as constituting a “comprehensive framework”¹⁷ that is “robust, coherent and consistent” with management principles and aligned with UNEG norms and standards.¹⁸ JIU identified UN Women as one of only three other UN entities out of the twenty-four assessed to have a corporate strategy for the evaluation function.¹⁹

10. The UN Women corporate evaluation function was found to be one of the “most valued in supporting policy implementation for decentralized functions” by the JIU assessment.²⁰ UN Women was amongst only five UN entities out of the twenty-four assessed by JIU to “manifest high level of institutionalization” for the implementation of the evaluation policy at the decentralized level.²¹

C. The current structural and institutional independence of the evaluation function is adequate but could be further strengthened

11. The UN Women evaluation function was found to be operating at an “adequate”²²

¹⁶ JIU, based on UN Women maturity matrix and Vol. II, Annex 8

¹⁷ MOPAN, 23

¹⁸ UNEG, 12 & 17; JIU, UN Women maturity matrix

¹⁹ JIU, 23

²⁰ JIU, 52

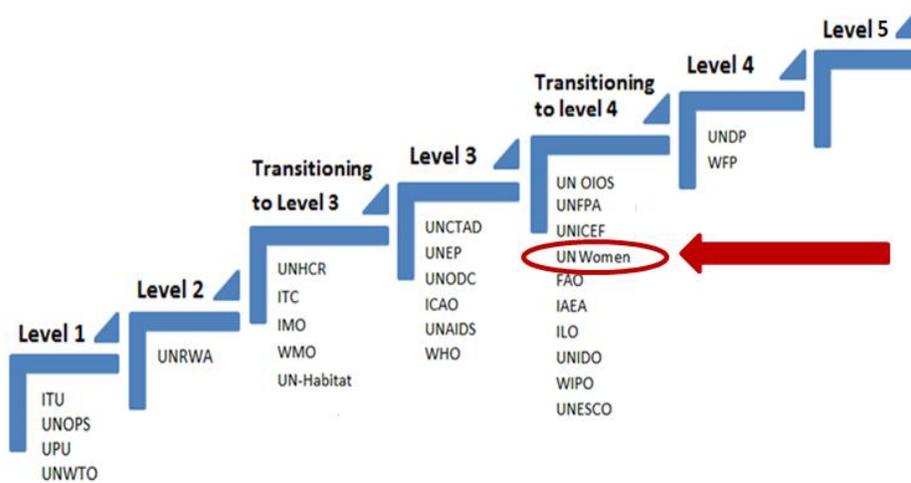
²¹ JIU, 51

²² UNEG, 4

level of independence given both UN Women’s and the evaluation function’s stages of development, but all assessments identified room for strengthening the level of independence. The assessments identified three key areas for strengthening: a) structural independence (reporting line); b) institutional independence (e.g. allocation of resources); and c) security for evaluation professionals.

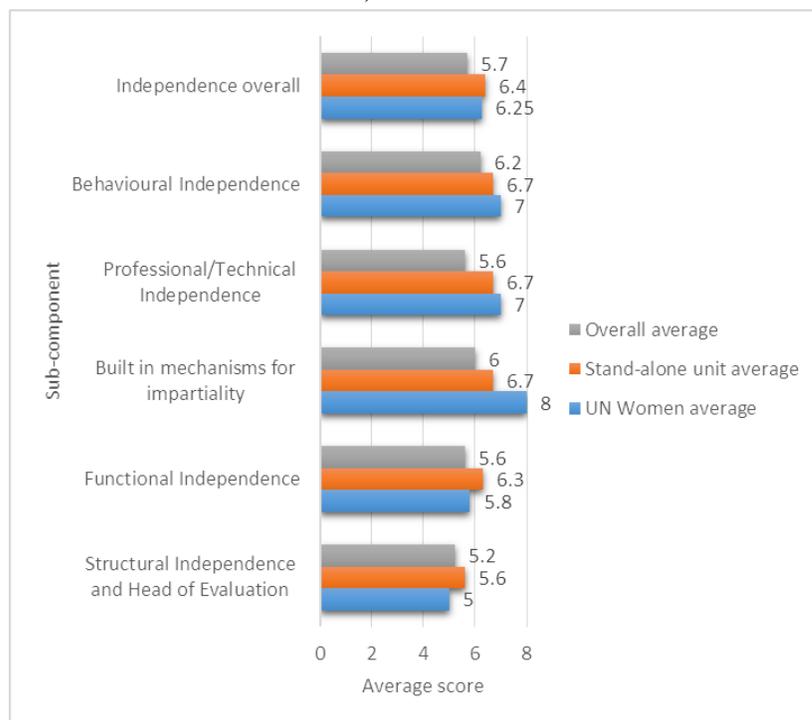
12. Although UN Women was ranked by JIU in the second highest category on overall independence as compared with other UN entities (see figure 5), when the sub-components are examined UN Women scored lower on structural and institutional independence as compared with other UN entities and even with similar stand-alone evaluation units (see Figure 6).

Figure 5 JIU-assessed performance on independence²³



²³ JIU, Vol. II, Annex 14

Figure 6 JIU-assessed average score by sub-component: independence (overall, stand-alone units and UN Women)²⁴



Structural independence

13. The current structural independence of the evaluation function, with the reporting line to the Under-Secretary General / Executive Director, was considered by all assessments to be “adequate”²⁵ at this point in time given its stage of development and showed a “high degree of independence” from UN Women senior management.²⁶ The UNEG review “did not find evidence of significant risks at present to the IEO’s independence”.²⁷ However, the JIU noted that for UN entities with a stand-alone evaluation unit, including UN Women, “...even where independence is not jeopardized and where current heads safeguard the independence, the dependence of the function on management subject to changes in leadership, may not be a stable solution for central corporate level reporting”.²⁸

14. Establishing the reporting line from IEO to the Executive Board was identified by all assessments as important for further strengthening the structural independence of the

²⁴ JIU, based on UN Women maturity matrix and Vol. II, Annex 14

²⁵ UNEG, 16

²⁶ MOPAN, 23

²⁷ UNEG, 16

²⁸ JIU, 30

UN Women evaluation function.²⁹ UNEG noted, “in time, the evaluation policy should be reviewed in a manner that anchors the independence of the evaluation function in reporting and accountability to the Executive Board”,³⁰ while JIU noted with regard to UN entities with a stand-alone evaluation unit, including UN Women, that the Executive Board, “should re-examine their policies for the structural independence of the evaluation function and decide on how best to enhance and safeguard structural independence ...”.³¹

15. Nevertheless, the point was clearly made by UNEG and JIU that strengthened independence should not preclude stakeholder involvement in ensuring a relevant and useful evaluation function.³² IEO’s practice of “active consultation and participation of senior management and other stakeholders” in the development of its evaluation plan was assessed by UNEG as “positive”.³³ JIU noted, “Mechanisms used to involve stakeholders in the various phases of the evaluation process provide important alternatives to housing the function under the executive head if the purpose for so doing is to enhance linkages with the organization”.³⁴

Institutional independence – budgetary allocation

16. The JIU assessment found that in the UN system there is generally an absence of norms to guide budget allocation for evaluation functions. However, it identified UN Women as one of only three UN entities out of the twenty-four assessed that have defined such norms.³⁵ The UN Women Evaluation Policy recommends that three percent of the total programme budget be invested in evaluation. Additionally, the UN Women Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 identified three per cent of the entity programme budget as the target for evaluation.

17. Although UN Women was identified as one of only two small budget entities that have funding levels for evaluation above the average as compared with other UN entities,³⁶ JIU also noted that due to the absence of norms to guide budget allocation in UN entities it is not possible to compare or benchmark across UN entities.³⁷ JIU also noted that small budget entities are “predisposed” to have higher spending than larger entities due to economies of scale.³⁸ JIU did, however, find a correlation between dedication of financial

²⁹ UNEG, 12; MOPAN, 23; JIU, 32

³⁰ UNEG, 16 & 17

³¹ JIU, 32

³² UNEG, 16; JIU, 31

³³ UNEG, 12 & 20

³⁴ JIU, 30

³⁵ JIU, 25

³⁶ JIU, 25

³⁷ JIU, 24, conclusion 7

³⁸ JIU, 26

resources and performance of the evaluation function: those entities with high performing evaluation functions also had a higher allocation of financial resources.³⁹

18. Nevertheless, UN Women received a low score from JIU for independence of the budgetary process because in practice the IEO proposes the budget but the Under-Secretary General / Executive Director decides on the allocation of funds for different organizational units, thus limiting the independence of the budgetary process.⁴⁰ JIU noted that a key factor for ensuring quality and impact of the corporate evaluation function is to have predictable and adequate resources.⁴¹ Similarly, UNEG noted that the independence of the UN Women evaluation function “could be reinforced by improving the transparency and predictability of allocation of resources...”.⁴² MOPAN also found that the independence of the evaluation function could be strengthened by having the Executive Board approve the evaluation budget.⁴³ At its annual session of June 2014, the Executive Board of UN Women requested UN Women “to present a separate budget line for evaluation activities in the Integrated Budget 2016-2017”, which is one way for ensuring resource allocation to the evaluation function.⁴⁴

Security for evaluation professionals

19. The last area identified as key for strengthening independence by both JIU and UNEG assessments is securing the tenure of the head of the evaluation unit and also security for evaluation professionals. JIU rated UN Women low in this category due to the fact that UN Women does not have in place any rules regarding the tenure for the head of the IEO and the same rules that apply to the rest of the entity apply to this post.⁴⁵ JIU noted that for UN entities in general this has been a major challenge to the structural independence of the evaluation function, and concluded that for enhancing independence and perceived credibility, the appointment, tenure, diversity and professional education background among heads of evaluation units needs to be addressed.

20. UNEG commended the appointment at the Director level of the head of evaluation, as a positive contribution to the credibility of the evaluation function of UN Women.⁴⁶ However, UNEG also noted that UN Women could strengthen independence “by improving ... security of tenure to the head of the IEO and longer term security of employment for professional evaluation positions”.⁴⁷

³⁹ JIU, 28

⁴⁰ JIU, UN Women maturity matrix

⁴¹ JIU, 24

⁴² UNEG, 19

⁴³ MOPAN, 23

⁴⁴ UN Women, Annual Session of the Executive Board, June 2014, Decision 2014/3; accessible at:

<http://papersmart.unmeetings.org/media2/3816170/advanced-unedited-decision-2014-3-unw-eb-evaluation-function.pdf>

⁴⁵ JIU, UN Women maturity matrix

⁴⁶ UNEG, 19

⁴⁷ UNEG, 18-19

D. UN Women evaluation function is credible. However, enhancing the quality of evaluations should be prioritized

21. UNEG found that, in general, IEO and the commitment of its staff are perceived highly by senior management and stakeholders.⁴⁸ UN Women was ranked by JIU in the second highest category overall when compared with other UN entities on the aspect of credibility (see figure 7) and also scored higher than the average on all sub-components assessed on quality (see figure 8).

Figure 7 JIU assessed performance on credibility⁴⁹

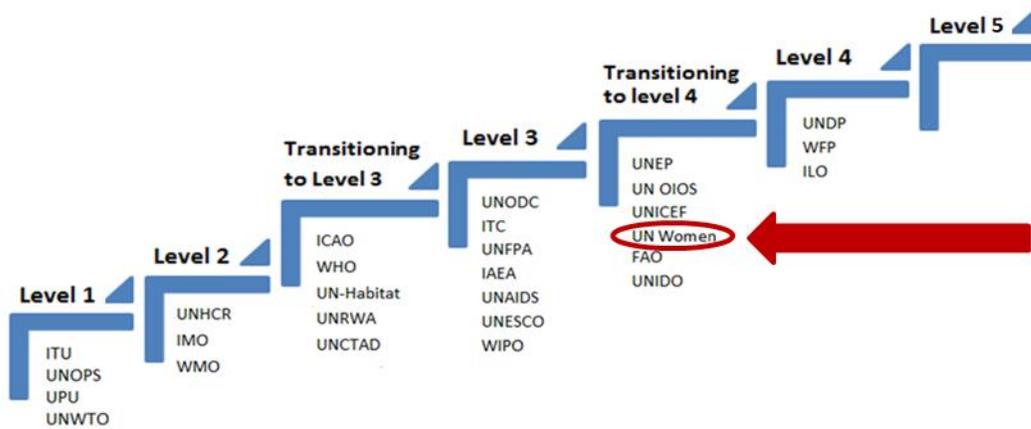
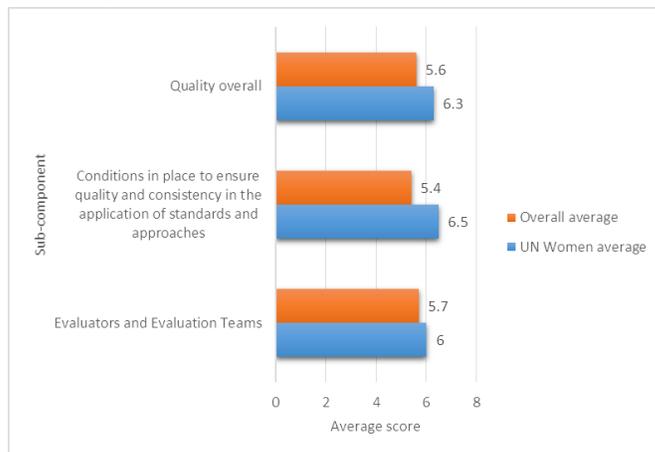


Figure 8 JIU assessed average score by sub-component: quality (overall and UN Women)⁵⁰



⁴⁸ UNEG, 19

⁴⁹ JIU, Vol. II, Annex 17

⁵⁰ JIU, based on UN Women maturity matrix and Vol. II, Annex 17

22. The three external assessments identified a number of systems in place that positively contribute to the credibility of the UN Women evaluation function, including:

- Active consultation in its processes
- Clear requirements for corporate and decentralized evaluation planning and budgeting for evaluation
- Establishment of Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) aimed at improving the quality and utility of evaluation and facilitating learning from evaluation
- Evaluation guidelines and corresponding training
- Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE), which is a repository of evaluation reports and facilitates the tracking of follow-up to evaluation

23. With respect to the quality of evaluations, UNEG encouraged the IEO to prioritize the conduct and support to quality, useful and timely evaluation in UN Women as its “core business”.⁵¹ UNEG identified “some risks to the evaluation function due to the variable quality of evaluations”. UNEG also noted that UN Women could utilize “different evaluation approaches” aligned with its mandate and ensure that the evaluation capacity sufficiently addresses gender-responsive approaches to evaluation.⁵²

24. With respect to the decentralized evaluation system, JIU found UN Women to be amongst five UN entities out of the twenty-four assessed that “manifest high level of institutionalization” of the implementation of the policies and systems for decentralized evaluation.⁵³ Nevertheless, UNEG noted that action is necessary for ensuring the quality and credibility of evaluation reports while JIU also raised this as an issue in general for the UN system.⁵⁴ Both UNEG and JIU highlighted the unique structure of UN Women IEO with regional evaluation specialists reporting directly to the IEO and their role supporting capacities within their respective region for undertaking decentralized evaluation at UN Women. While JIU noted that the effectiveness of their dual lines of accountability has yet to be tested,⁵⁵ UNEG assessed their role as a “positive factor” to strengthen the level of independence of decentralized evaluation.⁵⁶

25. Although UNEG did not assess any decentralized evaluation practice as “poor”, it found that the current level of impartiality and independence constitutes “a

⁵¹ UNEG, 13

⁵² UNEG, 21

⁵³ JIU, 52

⁵⁴ JIU, 55; UNEG, 4

⁵⁵ JIU, 56

⁵⁶ UNEG, 17

systemic-level risk to the credibility of the overall evaluation function”.⁵⁷ One of the main issues raised by UNEG is the level of involvement of management in the planning, conduct and follow-up to evaluations at the decentralized level that it sees as a “non-negligible risk” to its independence and impartiality.⁵⁸ The MOPAN assessment also highlighted this issue, noting that decentralized decision making regarding evaluation, “means that it is strongly dependent on the organisational culture, leadership, and availability and quality of human and financial resources in the country offices”.⁵⁹

26. On the other hand, JIU recognized that decentralized evaluation is by “nature” not structurally or functionally independent⁶⁰ but identified several practices, all of which are included in UN Women guidance, that contribute to enhancing impartiality, objectivity, and transparency of decentralized evaluation: “(i) use of external consultants, (ii) stakeholder involvement; (iii) use of Evaluation Management Groups or Evaluation Committees; and (iv) application of ethical codes of conduct and guidelines on behavioral independence”.⁶¹ JIU also highlighted that only “some” UN entities, including UN Women, have the corporate evaluation office conduct quality assurance of decentralized evaluations.⁶²

27. In order to strengthen the credibility of the decentralized evaluation system, UNEG suggests the following key actions: a) external quality assurance approval at key stages of the evaluation process including final report sign-off;⁶³ b) strengthening safeguards so that staff directly involved in programmes/projects are not the evaluation manager;⁶⁴ and c) Establishment of a roster of vetted, qualified consultants, which would contribute to quality reports.⁶⁵

28. Nevertheless, while JIU highlighted the need for UN entities to enhance the transparency and quality of decentralized evaluation reports in general,⁶⁶ it also recommended UN entities find a balance between the accountability and learning aspects of the overall evaluation function.⁶⁷ JIU notes, “Achieving fit-for-purpose of the decentralized evaluation must begin to reconsider the importance of this function

⁵⁷ UNEG, 4 & 17

⁵⁸ UNEG, 4 & 17

⁵⁹ MOPAN, 23

⁶⁰ JIU, 54

⁶¹ JIU, 55

⁶² JIU, 55

⁶³ UNEG, 4 & 14

⁶⁴ UNEG, 18

⁶⁵ UNEG, 15

⁶⁶ JIU, 54

⁶⁷ JIU, 24, Recommendation 2

in first and foremost supporting the conduct of formative evaluation for improvement and for making necessary corrections for the eventual attainment of results”.⁶⁸

E. UN Women has established systems aimed at facilitating use of evaluation. However, more could be done to facilitate lesson-learning and to enhance utility of evaluations

29. UN Women systems and practices for facilitating use and communicating evaluation results were found by all reports to be positive contributions to ensuring utility.⁶⁹ The reports identified UN Women systems for facilitating use of evaluation which include: a) the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use (GATE) system⁷⁰ developed to facilitate the dissemination of and learning from UN Women evaluations and to track the use of evaluation; b) the Global Evaluation Report Analysis and Assessment System (GERAAS) to enhance the systematic use of evaluation findings and lessons learned for decision making at UN Women; c) the Gender Equality Evaluation Portal⁷¹ to strengthen and promote the exchange of evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations on gender equality and women’s empowerment with stakeholders and other potential users; and d) the reports on the use of evaluation to the Under-Secretary General / Executive Director on a bi-annual basis and to the Executive Board on an annual basis.

30. JIU found that only 40 per cent of UN system entities assessed, including UN Women, had “well established” systems for tracking and reporting on use of evaluation.⁷² While UN Women was ranked in the second highest ranked category as compared with other UN entities, all entities scored lower overall in this area (see figure 9). A closer look at the sub-components assessed by JIU reveals that UN Women scored above the overall average for issues related to utility of evaluation (see figure 10).

⁶⁸ JIU, 55

⁶⁹ UNEG, 13 & 24; JIU, 37; MOPAN, 45

⁷⁰ gate.unwomen.org

⁷¹ genderevaluation.unwomen.org

⁷² JIU, 37

Figure 9 JIU-assessed performance on utility⁷³

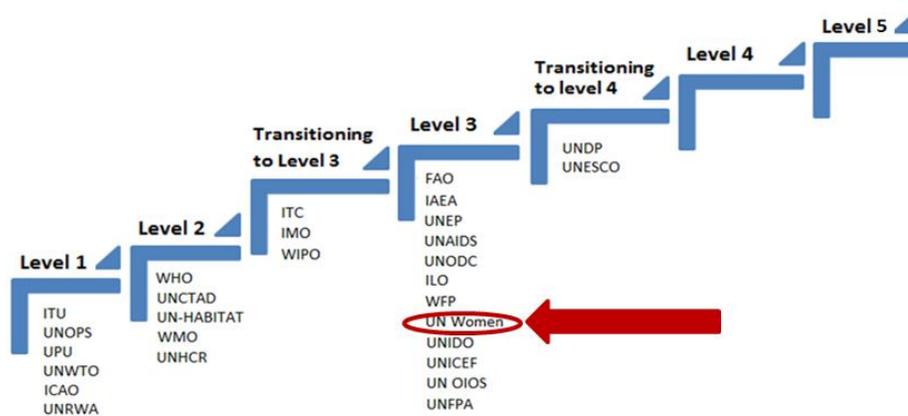
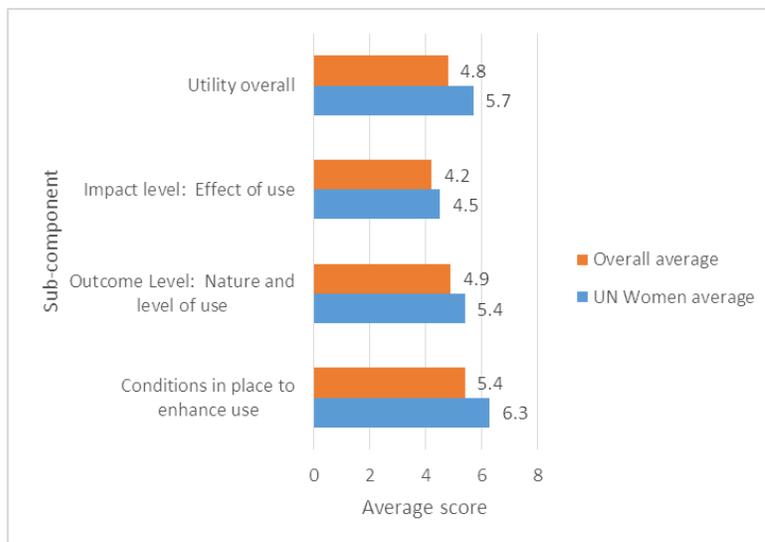


Figure 10 JIU-assessed average score by sub-component: utility (overall and UN Women)⁷⁴



31. Nevertheless, the three assessments saw room for improving use of evaluation and dissemination of lessons learned.⁷⁵ In particular, UNEG found that UN Women evaluation products could be better aligned with Executive Board and management needs and information requirements⁷⁶ and suggested that country programme or strategy evaluations be undertaken.⁷⁷ JIU recommended UN system entities

⁷³ JIU, Vol. II, Annex 18

⁷⁴ JIU, based on UN Women maturity matrix and Vol. II, Annex 18

⁷⁵ UNEG, 22; MOPAN, 45; JIU, 58

⁷⁶ UNEG, 23

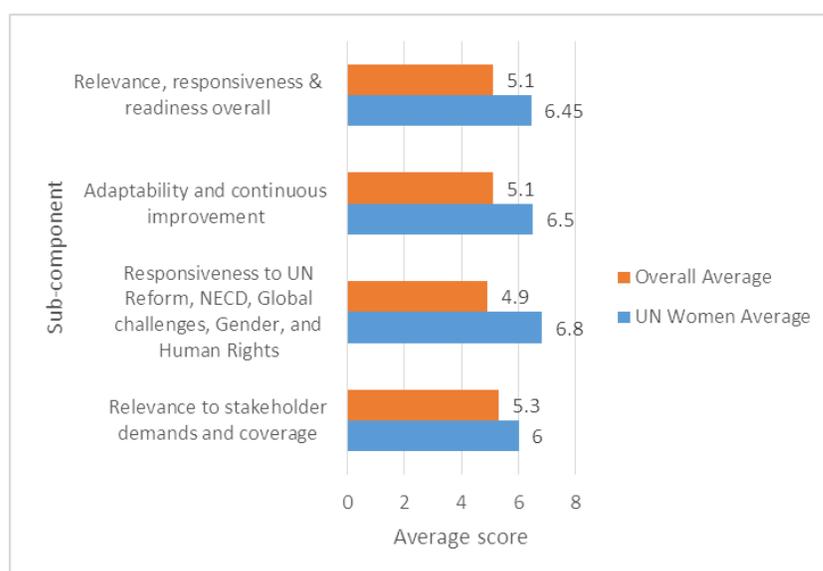
⁷⁷ UNEG, 24

prioritize utility and use of evaluation and report to legislative bodies “on the level and nature of use and the impact of use”.⁷⁸ JIU also recommended a systems approach to utilizing evaluative information produced at country, regional and global levels by UN entities.⁷⁹ In particular, JIU highlighted that consolidation of evaluative information at the country level “would provide an extensive knowledge base to guide development in countries...” which would be of interest to the UN system and beyond.⁸⁰

F. UN Women has demonstrated leadership in promoting gender equality and human rights responsive evaluation through coordination efforts within the UN system and partnership, including at country level. UN Women should prioritize its UN system coordination work and work with national institutions to move the gender-responsive evaluation agenda forward.

32. JIU found that across UN entities two key areas have a “very low level of development”: UN coherence and national evaluation capacity development.⁸¹ Nevertheless, UN Women was one of only six UN entities out of twenty-four assessed by JIU found to have a “high degree” of readiness to address global challenges due to its “outward focus and a definite intent of addressing global changes and emerging imperatives”(see figure 11).⁸²

Figure 11 JIU-assessed average score by sub-component: relevance, responsiveness and readiness⁸³



33. JIU recognized the efforts of UN Women as driving the gender-responsive

⁷⁸ JIU, 38, Conclusion 10; Recommendation 6

⁷⁹ JIU, 57 & 59

⁸⁰ JIU, 59

⁸¹ JIU, 51

⁸² JIU, 42

⁸³ JIU, based on UN Women maturity matrix and Vol. II, Annex 24

evaluation agenda through “persistent engagement”⁸⁴ and scored UN Women in the highest category, noting that UN Women has played a leading role in promoting gender, human rights and diversity perspectives in evaluation within the entity and the UN System.⁸⁵ UNEG noted that the evaluation approaches of UN Women with respect to gender-responsive evaluation could be enhanced through adoption of approaches specific to the requirements of the evaluand⁸⁶ and, as mentioned above, through ensuring capacities for employing gender-responsive evaluation approaches.⁸⁷

34. UN Women participation in UNEG was scored in the highest category in the JIU assessment, as it was found to be an active member of UNEG, as demonstrated by UN Women’s leading role in the development of the handbook on integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation and also active support to other working groups.⁸⁸ UNEG concurred with this assessment noting its “meaningful participation and leadership in UNEG”.⁸⁹ JIU noted that the majority of joint evaluations undertaken by UN entities have been in crosscutting areas, such as gender equality, and thus lessons learned from these processes should have a “significant role in advancing the agenda for coherence in evaluations”.⁹⁰

35. JIU recommended that all UN entities “actively engage in joint evaluation”⁹¹ and both JIU and UNEG saw room for enhancing the inter-agency work of the UN Women evaluation function.⁹² The reports identified joint evaluation as a means for strengthening capacities of UN entities for gender-responsive evaluation and evaluating programming on gender equality and women’s empowerment.⁹³ UNEG also noted that in order to enhance utility, UN Women should conduct an assessment of its performance in supporting gender-responsive evaluation within the UN System and also prioritize this aspect of its work.⁹⁴ JIU noted, “UN Women’s dual focus on normative and operational work calls for a dynamic approach in collaboration and innovation in its work for system-wide value”.⁹⁵

36. JIU also explored UN system coherence at the decentralized level, suggesting that efficiency could be enhanced through strengthening UN coherence, collaboration and national ownership at the level of decentralized evaluation.⁹⁶ JIU highlighted the need for more joint evaluation, in particular in the context of the UNDAF.⁹⁷

⁸⁴ JIU, viii

⁸⁵ JIU, UN Women maturity matrix

⁸⁶ UNEG, 25

⁸⁷ UNEG, 21

⁸⁸ JIU, UN Women maturity matrix

⁸⁹ UNEG, 3 & 12

⁹⁰ JIU, 41

⁹¹ JIU, 41

⁹² JIU, UN Women maturity matrix; UNEG, 25

⁹³ UNEG, 25; JIU, 40

⁹⁴ UNEG, 4, 15 & 25

⁹⁵ JIU, UN Women maturity matrix

⁹⁶ JIU, 54

⁹⁷ JIU, 59

37. JIU and UNEG both emphasized national evaluation capacity development as a key area for the evaluation community moving forward.⁹⁸ UN Women was one of only three UN entities out of the twenty-four assessed by JIU that had incorporated national evaluation capacity development into its evaluation policy and evaluation strategy.⁹⁹ UN Women's lead role in EvalPartners was highlighted with respect to its efforts to strengthen national capacities for gender-responsive evaluation,¹⁰⁰ although UNEG suggested these linkages be made more explicit.¹⁰¹

38. Both JIU and UNEG encouraged UN Women to strengthen its efforts in this area;¹⁰² UNEG also recognized the national level as a key area that requires gender-responsive evaluation approaches.¹⁰³ JIU encouraged UN entities to align their work at the national level with national systems¹⁰⁴ and to work together to strengthen national capacities for evaluation.¹⁰⁵ UNEG identified that UN Women efforts for national evaluation capacity development could focus at the national level through enhancing capacities of governments, for example through, "... collaborative evaluations ... country-led evaluations, joint evaluations, etc."¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, UNEG cautioned that although national evaluation capacity development is important, UN Women's priority should remain with its core evaluation tasks and the UN system.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁸ JIU, 44, UNEG, 26

⁹⁹ JIU, 44

¹⁰⁰ JIU, UN Women maturity matrix; UNEG, 12

¹⁰¹ UNEG, 26

¹⁰² UNEG, 26; JIU, 50

¹⁰³ UNEG, 4

¹⁰⁴ JIU, 59, Recommendation 9

¹⁰⁵ JIU, 46, Recommendation 8

¹⁰⁶ UNEG, 26

¹⁰⁷ UNEG, 25

Annex 2. Alignment between External Assessment Suggestions and GEAC Recommendations

The table below aligns the ‘points for attention’ and recommendations of the UNEG, JIU and MOPAN external assessments of the UN Women evaluation function with those of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee and is organized by criteria assessed: independence, credibility, utility and UN Coordination and National Evaluation Capacity Development.

Report	External Assessment Suggestion	Relevant GEAC Recommendation
Independence		
UNEG	The Panel is of the view that, in time, the evaluation policy should be reviewed in a manner that anchors the independence of the evaluation function in reporting and accountability to the Executive Board. (pp. 4, 14, 17)	Recommendation 5
	The Executive Board could undertake to review periodically the organisation, systems and evaluation policy with a view to considering questions such as the term of the Director of IEO, human resources for evaluation, reporting lines and budget allocations to the evaluation function of UN Women. (p. 16)	Recommendation 5
	The Panel invites the IEO to maintain a focus on mitigating the risks, real to independence, or perceived to credibility, of management involvement in evaluation at the decentralised level by, for example, considering external quality assurance approval at key stages of the evaluation process including final report sign off. (p. 14)	Recommendation 5
	The institutional independence of the evaluation function should evolve towards reporting and accountability beyond executive management, and through the IEO for decentralised evaluation, to the governance level of the organisation, i.e. the Executive Board of UN Women. (p. 18)	Recommendation 5
	The Panel considers that, for dedicated evaluation staff of IEO, renewable annual employment contracting does not offer sufficient support to behavioural independence and that longer term stability should be provided, consistent with the principle of tenure for the Director of IEO. (p. 18)	Recommendation 4
	From a policy perspective, independence could be reinforced by improving the transparency and predictability of allocation of resources to the evaluation function, including security of tenure to the head of the IEO and longer term security of employment for professional evaluation positions. (p. 19)	Recommendation 4

Report	External Assessment Suggestion	Relevant GEAC Recommendation
MOPAN	The evaluation function does not yet have the highest degree of independence, since the corporate evaluation plan and corresponding budget are approved by the Under-Secretary General / Executive Director, rather than by the Executive Board. (p. 23)	Recommendations 4 & 5
JIU	...where the central evaluation function is co-located with the other oversight functions or is integrated with executive management functions, should provide the support needed to enhance the function and ensure its quality, integrity, visibility and added-value. (p. 20)	Recommendation 5
	The legislative bodies should request the executive heads of United Nations system organizations to develop a comprehensive budget framework and resource allocation plan for their respective evaluation functions based on what it costs to maintain an effective and sustainable evaluation function that adds value to the organization. Such plan should be submitted for consideration to the legislative bodies within existing budgetary and reporting mechanisms and processes. (p. 28)	Recommendation 4
	The legislative bodies should direct the executive heads of United Nations system organizations to review and revise, as necessary, existing policies for the structural location of the function and the appointment of the head of evaluation offices in order to enhance independence, integrity, ethics, credibility and inclusion. (p. 33)	Recommendations 4 & 5
Credibility		
UNEG	The Panel encourages strongly the IEO to maintain a priority focus on improving and consolidating the profile and quality of its core business, i.e. conducting and supporting evaluation in UN Women that contributes positively, usefully, visibly, reliably, meaningfully and in a timely manner to the achievement of UN Women's mission. (pp. 4, 13)	Recommendation 2
	The Panel concludes that the decentralised evaluation system should put in place additional measures to safeguard its independence from the operations it assesses as currently its processes are subject directly to management orientations and decisions. (p. 19)	Recommendation 5

Report	External Assessment Suggestion	Relevant GEAC Recommendation
	The Panel finds that there exist opportunities to clarify the roles of reference groups, steering committees and the like, as well as validation processes so that the independence of the evaluation is reasonably safeguarded while allowing for meaningful participation of stakeholders. (p. 19)	Recommendation 2
	The Panel encourages the establishment of rosters of vetted qualified professional evaluation consultants, as an additional factor to increase the likelihood of quality evaluation. (p. 15)	Recommendation 2
JIU	The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should develop the institutional framework and necessary support systems for enhancing the quality and added value of decentralized evaluation and the role it could play in supporting the United Nations system address emerging challenges including those of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and in enhancing coherence and alignments in evaluation within organizations, across United Nations system organizations and with national institutions. (p. 58)	Recommendation 2
Utility		
UNEG	To ensure continued relevance of evaluation to management information needs, active and close consultation with management should be maintained. (p. 16)	Recommendation 2
	The Panel invites the IEO to give appropriate priority to focusing on, and responding to, the management needs and policy making requirements of UN Women as well as to being relevant to Executive Board oversight responsibilities. (pp. 4, 15).	Recommendation 2
	The Panel found that the IEO framework for gender responsive evaluation could be more effective by adopting approaches specific to institutions and their particular requirements. (p. 25)	Recommendation 2
JIU	The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should make the use of evaluation an organizational priority based on a well-defined vision, strategy and results framework for the evaluation function and report to their legislative bodies on the level and nature of use and the impact of use. (p. 38)	Recommendation 3
	The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should adopt a balanced approach aimed at addressing both the accountability and the development of a learning organization with the appropriate incentive systems for innovation, risk	Recommendation 5

Report	External Assessment Suggestion	Relevant GEAC Recommendation
	taking and the use of multidisciplinary perspectives to enhance change and transformation for organizational advancement and success. (p. 24)	
UN Coordination		
UNEG	Gender responsive evaluation in the UN system – assess its performance in supporting gender responsive evaluation in the UN system and place priority on the UN system (while remaining attentive to countries, civil society and other networks) (pp. 4, 15).	Paragraph 13
	Opportunities exist for strengthening gender responsiveness through joint evaluations with UN organisations and these may be capitalised on by identifying systematically entry points for collaboration with sister agencies.(p. 25)	Paragraph 13
	The Panel confirms that, while remaining attentive to partner countries, civil society and other networks, UN Women’s evaluation function should maintain a focus on the priority which is the UN system and avoid the risk that the coordination and promotion work takes precedence over core evaluation tasks. (p. 25)	Paragraph 13
JIU	The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should request the evaluation offices to reassess the policies, strategies and priorities of the evaluation function in order to strategically position the evaluation function in their respective organizations to enhance its relevance in supporting the United Nations system address current changes and challenges, and to achieve impact and sustainability. (p. 40)	Recommendation 5
National Evaluation Capacity Development		
UNEG	There is a case for greater focus on national government institutions, i.e. on public institutional arena where arguably gender responsive evaluation is key. (pp. 4,15)	Paragraph 14
JIU	The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the CEB, should initiate steps and support innovations for system-wide collaboration and work with partners to contribute to strengthening national capacities for evaluation. (p. xi)	Paragraph 14